SPIDER-MAN'S TANGLED WEB™

MARVEL

SPIDER-MAN'S TANGLED WEB

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PART 1

GLENN FABRY 01

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME, PARKER.

THE SUPER-POWERS -- THE SECRET IDENTITY -- THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL -- THE LIFE OF HIGH ADVENTURE --

THEY SHOULD ALL BE MINE.

'SCUSE ME?

SOMETHIN' WRONG WITH THE FOOD?

HOW WOULD I KNOW?

AIN'T YOU EATIN' IT?

I'M SITTING HERE LOOKING OUT THIS WINDOW. SO LONG AS I ORDER AND PAY FOR FOOD I'M ENTITLED TO DO SO.

HI! I'M JANE

NOW GO AND INFLICT YOURSELF ON SOMEONE ELSE, YOU SOW.

BUT YOU GOT THE GIFTS --

AND I GOT THE SHAFT.

HI! I'M JANE

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME, PARKER...

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME.

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

The COMING of The THOUSAND

GARTH ENNIS WRITER
JOHN McCREA PENCILS
JAMES HODGKINS INKS
STEVE BUCCELLATO COLORS
RS/COMICRAFT's WES ABBOTT LETTERS

RRAAAARRRRRR!

WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID?

AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOHN MIESEGAES ASSISTANT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA CHIEF
BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

Deli-isio

Deli-

BB

SHA

McCREA + HODGKINS

THIS IS A MISTAKE, RHINO...

YEAH! YOURS!

SHOULDNA GOT IN THE WAYA MY BANK JOB, BUGBOY! THAT'S MY WEEKEND IN VEGAS YA JUST FLUSHED DOWN THE PAN!

YOU ARE DEAD!

NO, I MEAN FIGHTING *ME* IS A MISTAKE. JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHER TIMES YOU TRIED IT.

DIDN'T YOU NOTICE HOW MUCH YOU GOT HURT? DIDN'T YOU NOTICE YOU ALWAYS *LOST?*

FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING, INSECT!

AH, BUT YOU'RE FORGETTING SOMETHING...

WHAT?!

RRAAARR

HOW UNBELIEVABLY *DUMB* YOU ARE --

RRRAAAARRGGHH!

YOU COCKY LITTLE MAGGOT, PARKER.

SO SURE OF YOURSELF. SO IN LOVE WITH YOURSELF.

YOU BEAT A CRETIN LIKE THAT AND YOU THINK YOU'RE GOD'S GIFT TO THE WORLD.

WHERE ARE YA, YA PUKE?! COME OUTTA THERE! I'M GONNA POUND YOUR STINKIN' HEAD TO MINCEMEAT!!

THWIP

Oh, YOO-HOO...

RIGHT!!

TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED, RHINO. DON'T TRY AND RUSH THINGS.

Oh, LOOK! HE'S HAVING A THOUGHT!

LOUSY LITTLE WISEMOUTH PUNK --!

WHIZ BANG

RRRRAAAAHH!

WORKS AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT, THAT BRAIN.

HUH?!

THAT IS *IT* --

Ah!

WHAT IS IT YOU'RE FORGETTING, RHINO?

WHAT D'YA MEAN?

WHAT WAS IT YOU FORGOT LAST TIME? MM?

FORGOT... Uh...

COME ON, YOU KNOW! I TOLD YOU WHAT IT WAS!

HOW UNBELIEVABLY... COME ON...

UNBELIEVABLY ***WHAT*** YOU WERE...?

WHAT'RE YA *TALKIN' ABOUT...?*

OHHHH --!

VERY CLEVER, PARKER.

NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS STAND AROUND ACTING THE HERO.

HI I'M JANE

AND YOU *DO*, DON'T YOU?

YOU TALK TO THE COPS AND YOU SIGN A FEW AUTOGRAPHS, AND Oh, HOW ***BLESSED*** THESE MORTALS ARE THAT YOU SHOULD DEIGN TO WALK AMONG THEM...

AND YOU WAIT WHILE THE AUTHORITIES ARRIVE AND DRAG THAT OAF OUT FROM UNDER THE TRUCK...

GLEE

SAME TIME NEXT WEEK, THEN?

WHY YOU LITTLE --

AND I WATCH YOU AND I HATE YOU AND I CURSE YOU, PARKER, ***BECAUSE IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME.***

THAT'S MY LIFE YOU'RE LIVING.

MY WEB YOU'RE SPINNING.

MY ADVENTURES YOU'RE HAVING, MY VILLAINS YOU'RE FIGHTING, MY WORLD YOU'RE SAVING, MY GLORY YOU'RE GRABBING.

AND MARK MY WORDS, PARKER.

I WANT WHAT'S ***MINE.***

PETER...

AUNT MAY, THIS CAKE IS *GREAT* --

PRODUCT OF IRELAND

PETER, DID YOU DO MY LAUNDRY ALONG WITH YOUR OWN?

X MEN ON FOX TV GUIDE

YEAH, I SAW YOU LEFT IT OUT --

...Oh, NO...

LISTEN, I'M REALLY SORRY..

DON'T YOU KNOW NOT TO MIX WHITES AND COLORS, PETER? WHAT ON EARTH DID YOU PUT THEM IN WITH, ANYWAY?

MY, MY, MY HAWAIIAN SHIRT, Uh, TYE-DYED KIND OF THING, Uh --

LOOK, I TRULY AM SORRY. I PROMISE I'LL BUY YOU A NEW BLOUSE, I'LL GET IT FOR YOU TOMORROW...

IT'S NOT THE BLOUSE, IT'S THE TABLECLOTH. YOUR UNCLE BEN AND I WERE GIVEN IT AS A WEDDING PRESENT.

IT'S IRISH LINEN. YOU WON'T FIND ANOTHER LIKE IT IN ALL OF NEW YORK CITY...

AUNT MAY... Oh, AUNT MAY, I AM **SO** STUPID...!

WELL.

NO USE CRYING OVER SPILT MILK.

HAVE YOU GOT ENOUGH CAKE? CAN I GET ANYTHING ELSE FOR YOU?

I'M FINE, AUNT MAY, I REALLY COULDN'T BE BETTER. PLEASE JUST SIT DOWN AND REST FOR A MINUTE, HUH?

I WAS GOING TO BAKE A PIE...

HONESTLY, AUNT MAY, YOU ***REALLY*** DON'T HAVE TO --

LET ME KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

ARE YOU SEEING THAT NICE GIRL TONIGHT? THE MODEL, Um...

SKYE. YEAH, WE'RE GOING TO THE FASHION AWARDS.

Oooh, HOW GLAMOROUS! WILL THERE BE DANCING?

NO.

THERE'LL BE SKYE'S... FRIENDS...

YOUR UNCLE BEN ***LOVED*** DANCING.

HE WAS SO GOOD AT IT.

SO LIGHT ON HIS FEET.

SO HANDSOME.

I REMEMBER WHEN HE CAME BACK FROM THE WAR...

IT ENDED IN EUROPE IN MAY OF 1945, BUT THE JAPANESE LASTED ANOTHER FEW MONTHS. AND ALL MY FRIENDS' HUSBANDS AND BEAUS WERE COMING HOME, BUT BEN WAS ON A CARRIER IN THE PACIFIC -- AND IT SOMETIMES SEEMED LIKE ALL OF NEW YORK WAS DANCING, EVERYONE BUT ME...

AND I WAITED AND WAITED AND WAITED --

AND ONE DAY THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND IT WAS ***HIM.***

BACK FROM THE WAR.

AND THE VERY FIRST THING WE DID WAS GO OUT DANCING.

SHOW ME.

THAT'S IT... YOU LEAD, YOU SEE...
LIKE THIS?
YES, JUST LIKE THAT. YOU'VE GOT IT.
♪ THEY CALL IT THE **JERSEY BOUNCE...** ♪
♪ THE RHYTHM THAT **REALLY** COUNTS... ♪
♪ THE TEMPERATURE **ALWAYS** MOUNTS... ♪
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU KNEW THIS --!
YOU'VE BEEN SINGING IT TO YOURSELF FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, AUNT MAY.
♪ WHENEVER THEY PLAY, THAT CRAZY RHYTHM ♫ THEY PLAY... ♪

YOU WOULDN'T REMEMBER ME, PARKER.

NO, MR. HIGH AND MIGHTY SUPER HERO WOULDN'T REMEMBER *ME*.

...OR MAYBE YOU WOULD.

AFTER ALL, I GAVE YOU ENOUGH NIGHTMARES.

YOU CAN SKIP LUNCH OR YOU CAN TAKE A BEATIN', PARKER. YOU CAN'T DO BOTH.

COME ON, FIFTY CENTS, PAY UP...

BOYS! WASH YOUR HANDS!

I DON'T *HAVE* TO GIVE YOU MY LUNCH MONEY, CARL! MY AUNT SAYS BULLIES ARE JUST COWARDS AND IF YOU STAND UP TO THEM THEY LEAVE YOU ALONE!

Jez

Loopy, 87

WELL SHE WAS LYIN', PARKER! *SHE WAS LYIN'!*

DA BOMB

ALL OF

AGLUGLUGLUGLUG

Loopy suds in da house!

YER AUNT *HATES* YOU, PARKER! SHE SET YOU UP FOR ME!

NO SHE *DIDN'T* --

AAAAAHH!

SHE TOLD ME TO GET YOU, PARKER!

WH... WH...

WHY ARE YOU *DOING THIS TO ME...?*

'CAUSE I *CAN.*

HEADS UP --

HAPPY DAYS, PARKER.

HAPPY, HAPPY DAYS.

DAILY BUGLE

DAYS THAT ARE SOON TO COME AGAIN.

TELL HIM HE'S FIRED, YOU HEAR ME? NO! SCRATCH THAT! TELL HIM HE'S DEAD!!

DITKO PHOTO PAPER

RIGHT AWAY, MR. JAMESON!

WHERE WAS I? Oh YES, THESE. NOT INTERESTED, PARKER.

BUT --

BUT NOTHING. TWO SUPER-FREAKS FIGHTING IN THE STREET, ONE OF THEM THAT WEB-SLINGING CREEP: OLD HAT, PARKER. BEEN THERE, PUBLISHED THAT.

NOT INTERESTED.

BUT --

SEEN IT A HUNDRED TIMES, PARKER. USED TO BE FRONT PAGE MATERIAL -- NOW IT'S HALF A PARAGRAPH ON PAGE SIX.

GET ME BILL GATES LAUGHING LIKE SATAN. GET ME DICK CHENEY HOLDING HIS CHEST AND GASPING. GET ME SOMETHING I CAN ***USE***.

IN THE MEANTIME: GET OUT.

SEE YOUR LUCK'S RUNNING TRUE TO FORM.

AND THEN SOME. THAT'S ME OFFICIALLY BROKE.

WELL, WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE YOUR PICTURES WITH ME. MAYBE I CAN PERSUADE THE OLD BUZZARD HIS HALF-A-PARAGRAPH NEEDS BRIGHTENING UP.

MISS PATTON, THAT WOULD BE SO SWEET OF YOU!

DAILY BUGLE
SKY OF FIRE AND ICE

YOU CAN CALL ME JESS, KID. EVERYONE ELSE DOES.

AND I CAN GET A LOT SWEETER THAN --

YOU'RE A LIFESAVER! YOU'VE TOTALLY MADE MY DAY!

MISS PATTON, I GOTTA GO! I OWE YOU ONE, OKAY?

SEE YOU!

...SURE, KID.

SURE.

GO HOME, JESS.

REST ROOM

STOP DELAYING THE INEVITABLE.

GO HOME.

FEED CAT.

DIE OLD MAID.

Oh YES, I WANT WHAT'S MINE, PARKER.

AND I'M GOING TO GET IT.

NO MATTER WHAT IT COSTS IN BLOOD.

AAAAHH!

AAAOOW...!

WHAT THE --

Oh, YES.

YOU'LL DO.

MAGGOT!

...Uh?

COME ON.

COME ON.

BE A GOOD GIRL, NOW.

BE A GOOD --?

YOU ARE REALLY *ASKING FOR IT* --

SCARED AT LAST?

WH-WH- WHAT DO YOU WANT --?

I WANT TO DANCE ACROSS THE ROOFTOPS.

NO --

NO --

I WANT TO BATTLE DOCTOR OCTOPUS.

I WANT ALL OF MANHATTAN TO LOOK UP AND GASP.

I WANT WOMEN LIKE THIS --

WHAT ARE YOU?

TO FALL AT MY FEET.

I AM THE THOUSAND.

NOOOOOOOO!!

STORE

AAAAAAAHH!!
AAAAAAAHH!!
AAAAAAAHH!!

STORE

AAAAAAIIIEEEEEEE

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME.

AND VERY, VERY SOON, PARKER --

IT WILL BE.

PART 2

GLENN FABRY 01

Annual Midtown Fashion Awards

DARLING --

OH YOU LOOK WONDERFUL --

I MUST JUST GO AND POWDER MY NOSE --

RUDI, YOU ARE TOO MUCH --

ONE BIG NOSTRIL, THAT'S THE BEAUTY OF IT --

WONDERFUL NOTHING, SOMEONE'S BEEN AT THE KRISPY KREMES AND BEEN KEEPING THEM DOWN --

MY OPINION? WELL... Um...

The COMING of the THOUSAND

PART TWO

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BILL JEMAS
PRESIDENT

THANKS...SO SKYE, Uh, I'M A LITTLE OUT OF MY DEPTH HERE --

Oh, THERE'S C.J. WITH BOLO AND RUPERT! YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT ON YOUR OWN FOR A MOMENT, WON'T YOU, PETER?

...SURE...

PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THIS INDUSTRY NEVER ***CEASE*** TO ***APPALL*** ME...I MEAN ***HEROIN CHIC***, THAT IS ***SO*** LAST MILLENNIUM, I CAN'T ***BELIEVE*** THE PRESS ARE STILL SHOUTING ABOUT ***THAT***...

MM...

MM...

THAT IS ***SO*** TRUE...

HEY, MAYBE THEY'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOU MOVING ON TO HARDER CHIC!

MORE CHAMPAGNE, SIR?

LOTS, PLEASE.

I MEAN YOU EAT BREAKFAST AND TEN MINUTES LATER YOU'RE DOWN ON YOUR KNEES GETTING RID OF IT -- SO *I* THOUGHT, WELL, WHY NOT JUST CUT OUT THE WHOLE MESSY BUSINESS...

MM...

MM...

SO ***THEN*** I THOUGHT, WELL, WHO NEEDS LUNCH OR DINNER EITHER, COME TO THAT...

AND WHAT DO ***YOU*** DO?

Oh...WELL, I'M A PHOTOGRAPHER --

REALLY?

-- FOR THE DAILY BUGLE.

I THINK EVEN THE WAY GIANNI ***DIED*** DEMONSTRATED HOW CREATIVELY BANKRUPT HE'D BECOME...I MEAN SHOT DEAD IN YOUR OWN HOME, WHAT WAS ***THAT?*** HE OBVIOUSLY HAD NOTHING INTERESTING LEFT TO SAY...

MM...

MM...

THAT IS **SO** TRUE...

WHY ARE YOU BEING LIKE THIS?
WHAT--?
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO UNCOOL?
I --
WE'VE BEEN HERE THREE HOURS AND EVERY TIME I LOOK 'ROUND I SEE YOU STANDING THERE JUST ***TOTALLY*** MISERABLE, LIKE MAKING ***NO*** EFFORT TO TALK TO ANYONE...
I MEAN THESE ARE MY ***FRIENDS***, PETER, OKAY? THESE ARE THE PEOPLE I WORK WITH, THAT I SEE ***EVERY DAY***...
IF YOU DIDN'T WANT TO COME TONIGHT YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST SAID, YOU KNOW? WE DIDN'T HAVE TO COME HERE, WE COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING ELSE.
ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS BE ***HONEST***...
BUT YOU SAID YOU COULDN'T AFFORD TO MISS THIS! YOU SAID YOU COME EVERY YEAR!
SKYE...LOOK, REALLY, I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS TO YOU I MEAN NO, IF I'M HONEST, IT'S NOT MY NUMBER ONE CHOICE FOR A GREAT NIGHT OUT, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT AN OLD GRINCH I CAN BE
WELL...
LOOK, I'LL BE FINE HERE, OKAY? I PROMISE I WILL. YOU HANG OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND TALK TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU NEED TO, AND I'LL -- I'LL FIND SOMETHING TO -- WELL, I'LL BE FINE.
YOU'RE SURE?
OF COURSE I AM. YOU GO HAVE FUN.
IT'S JUST...YOU KNOW.
I MEAN DON'T YOU THINK YOUR FRIENDS HERE ARE KIND OF A BUNCH OF --

ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS SHUT YOUR MOUTH.

BUT OH, NO...

P-PETER?

UH?

WILL YOU HELP ME, PETER?

MISS PATTON --?

I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT *CAN.*

MISS PATTON, WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO YOU --?

MY BOYFRIEND THREW ME OUT.

I'VE GOT NOWHERE TO GO. I DRINK A LOT, MORE THAN I CAN AFFORD. MY BOYFRIEND FOUND ME GOING THROUGH HIS WALLET.

ALL MY FRIENDS ARE HIS FRIENDS.

I GOT YOUR ADDRESS FROM THE BUGLE RECORDS, AND I THOUGHT... MAYBE...

YOU SEEM LIKE A NICE GUY AND I DON'T *KNOW* ANY NICE GUYS AND --

OH NO.

OH NO.

I AM *SO SORRY...!*

MISS PATTON, IT'S OKAY --

I FEEL LIKE SUCH AN IDIOT... I MEAN, YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME, AND HERE I AM EXPECTING YOU TO...

IT'S OKAY, MISS PATTON. REALLY. YOU CAN STAY AT MY PLACE TONIGHT, IT ISN'T A PROBLEM.

THAT... THAT'S SO KIND OF YOU...

COME ON, LET'S GET YOU OUT OF THE RAIN. YOU WAIT AND SEE, MISS PATTON --

IT'LL ALL LOOK BETTER IN THE MORNING.

MY, WHAT A BOY SCOUT YOU ARE, PARKER...

A.K.A. WHAT A *SUCKER.*

YOU ALWAYS WERE.

I GOT A *D* IN BIOLOGY, *PARKER!*

AAOW--!

DITKO

I TOLD YOU I NEEDED AT LEAST A *B,* DIDN'T I? WHAT'S THE POINT IN YOU WRITING MY PAPERS IF YOU CAN'T DO 'EM ANY BETTER THAN I CAN?

NNGGH! I DIDED HABE *TIBE,* CARL! I WAD DOO BIDDY DOOIG OOR *PHYDIG BABER!*

YEAH? ALL I GOT IN PHYSICS WAS A *C.*

OOH -- AAH -- AAAAAHHH...!

SQUEAL ALL YOU WANT, PARKER.

NO ONE'S GOING TO HELP YOU.

IN ALL THE YEARS YOU'VE KNOWN ME, KINDERGARTEN TO HIGH SCHOOL, DID ANYONE ***EVER*** TAKE YOUR SIDE?

YOU TOLD YOUR OLD BAG OF AN AUNT, AND SHE TOLD THE PRINCIPAL, AND HE ASKED FOR WITNESSES -- AND HOW MANY DID HE GET? WHO STOOD UP AND SAID YES, IT'S TRUE, CARL KING BULLIES PETER PARKER?

AND IT'S NOT 'CAUSE THEY'RE SCARED OF ***ME***, PARKER. THEY ***LIKE ME.***

IT'S 'CAUSE EVERYONE THINKS YOU'RE A ***WORM.***

E FOR EFFORT. PARKER.

MUST TRY HARDER.

WELL, IT ISN'T MUCH...

IT'S MORE THAN I DESERVE.

COME ON, DON'T TALK LIKE THAT. I'LL MAKE COFFEE; YOU GO IN THE BATHROOM AND DRY OFF. I'LL GET YOU SOME CLOTHES TO WEAR...

SHALL I WAIT HERE WHILE YOU CHANGE TO SPIDER-MAN?

SURE. I MEAN THEY WON'T FIT TOO WELL, BUT AT LEAST THEY'LL BE --

...WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?

YOU HEARD.

MISS...

PATTON...?

DEAD!

PHYSICS

TOO LATE TO SAVE HER! MINE NOW!

DEAD!

GUHH!

HAVING TROUBLE KEEPING UP, PARKER? NEED A RECAP?

I'VE KILLED JESS PATTON, I KNOW YOUR SECRET, I'M GOING TO SPEND THE NEXT TEN MINUTES *KICKING YOU ALL OVER TOWN* --

AND THEN I'M GOING TO --

OFF!

OH MY G--

CAN'T HURT ME, PARKER.

ANY MORE THAN YOU COULD HAVE SMELLED ME OUT WITH THOSE SENSES OF YOURS.

LET'S TAKE THIS OUTSIDE, SHALL WE?

THWIPP THWIPP THWIPP

OH, MAN --

UNNH!!

BETTER, Uh...

BETTER CHANGE TO SPIDER-MAN, I GUESS.

Oh BOY.

LOOKS LIKE I'M IN TROUBLE NOW.

WHAT... THE...

I AM THE THOUSAND.

HEADS UP!

GAHH--!

UNNHH!!

YOU'RE NOT *TRYING...!*

IT'S THE SUPER-SHOWDOWN TO END THEM ALL! A KNOCKDOWN, DRAG-OUT TUSSLE OF TITANS!

LET'S SEE THE SPEED THAT CONFOUNDED THE *LIZARD!* THE WIT THAT ENRAGED THE *RHINO!* THE PUNCH THAT STAGGERED THE *HULK!*

LET'S SEE SOME PASSION, PARKER!

HOW -- HOW DO YOU --

KNOW ME --?

I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU.

FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.

YAAH--!

WATCHING AND WAITING.

STOKING MY HATRED.

GROWING STRONGER.

GETTING READY TO *TAKE YOU DOWN.*

BY THE WAY, SHOULDN'T YOU BE DOING SOMETHING TO SAVE US?

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD--!

THWIPP

LISTEN TO ME-- FOR MERCY'S SAKE --

IF THERE'S ANYTHING LEFT OF MISS PATTON, YOU JUST CAN'T ***USE HER*** LIKE THIS --

TOO LATE, PARKER.

I ***ATE*** MISS PATTON FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

NNOOOO!

AAAAAAAAAHHH!

WHUNNCH

WAKEY, WAKEY...

Uh?

WHAT YOU...DO TO ME...

BIT YOU. PARALYZED YOU.

NOTHING PERMANENT.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, THOUGH, THAT'LL BE ABOUT AS PERMANENT AS IT GETS.

DO YOU REMEMBER ME, PARKER?

NO...

Oh, COME ON. NO ONE FORGETS THE KID WHO MAKES THEM EAT DOG MESS.

OR DANGLES THEM OFF THE WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE.

OR PUTS A KNIFE TO THEIR CROTCH WHEN THEY MESS UP HIS MATH PAPER.

CARL... *KING?*

BUT YOU CAN'T BE...

HOW COULD...I MEAN...

BECAUSE OF YOU, PARKER.

YOU AND YOUR STUPID LITTLE SECRET.

A FUN EVENING OUT FOR THE FIFTH YEAR SCIENCE CLASS AT MIDTOWN HIGH: A TRIP TO THE NUCLEAR PHYSICS EXHIBITION. HEY, IT BEAT STUDYING, RIGHT, PARKER?

MY FAVORITE PART WAS THE SCHOOL GEEK GETTING ***BIT ON THE HAND BY THE RADIOACTIVE SPIDER...***

YOU DIDN'T KNOW I SAW THAT, DID YOU? DIDN'T KNOW I FOLLOWED YOU, WHEN YOU CRAWLED OFF HOME TO WHINE TO AUNTIE MAY...

SURE I WENT AFTER YOU. ***PETER PARKER IN TROUBLE, HEY, I BET I CAN HAVE SOME FUN WITH THIS...***

"AND WHAT DO YOU THINK I SAW, PARKER?

"CARE TO TAKE A GUESS?"

"AND OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, PARKER...

"FOLLOWING YOU WATCHING YOUR GOOFY OLD AUNT'S APARTMENT...

"Oh, YOU BET I DID, 'CAUSE I ***KNEW*** I WAS ON TO SOMETHING...

"WHAT ***ELSE*** DO YOU THINK I SAW?"

WHOA.

YOU KNOW...

EVERYTHING.

I WANTED WHAT YOU HAD FOR MYSELF, PARKER. THE THINGS I COULD DO WITH IT...WITH POWER LIKE THAT...

BUT WHAT *I* GOT WAS *DIFFERENT.*

AAH--!

SOMETHING BETTER, PARKER.

SOMETHING WORSE.

SOMETHING THAT COULD LIVE ***INSIDE,*** THAT COULD LIQUEFY THE INNARDS OF A MAN AND WALK THE EARTH WITHIN HIS ***HOLLOW SHELL...***

SOMETHING THAT COULD WATCH.

AND WAIT.

AND *FESTER.*

SEE?

SEE NOW?

I AM THE THOUSAND.

NO --

NO WAY --

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME, PARKER...

THIS POWER OF YOURS, IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ***MINE.***

THIS IS WHAT ***MUST BE,*** PARKER. THIS IS ***JUSTICE,*** LONG OVERDUE.

COME ON, NOW. DON'T TRY AND FIGHT IT.

OPEN WIDE...

AAAAIIEEEIIGGHHH!

PART 3

GLENN FABRY

The COMING of the THOUSAND

PART THREE

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PARKER, WHAT IS ALL THAT NOISE

OH DEAR LORD --

MR. AMBROSE... *RUN...*

THE SUPER, I PRESUME?

Uh

Uh

Uh

BAD TIMING. VERY IRRITATING.

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ***PARKER'S*** BIG MOMENT, MR. AMBROSE.

Uh

Uh

BUT I CAN HARDLY JUST LET YOU WALK OUT OF HERE, CAN I?

Uh

AAAAIIIIEEEIIGGGHH!!

Oh, HUSH.

GUMFF

I'M DRINKING THIS IDIOT'S LIQUIFIED BRAIN.

DOES THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION?

YOU...YOU MONSTER...THIS IS...WHAT YOU DID TO MISS PATTON...

DOESN'T LIFE...MEAN *ANYTHING*...?

SHLOOOORRRPP

HIS GUTS WILL TAKE A LITTLE LONGER. HIS LUNGS AND KIDNEYS. SKELETON.

EVERYTHING BUT HIS SKIN -- AND NO ONE LOOKS DEEPER THAN THAT, DO THEY, PARKER?

THEN IT'LL BE YOUR TURN.

THIS...

THIS IS BECAUSE YOU... TRIED TO COPY WHAT HAPPENED TO ***ME***...

BRIGHT BOY.

ONCE I SAW WHAT YOUR ***ACCIDENT*** DID FOR YOU, I FIGURED BEING BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER WAS THE WAY TO GO. I HAD ALL KINDS OF IDEAS IN MIND.

IT WAS ONLY WHEN I BROKE INTO THE EXHIBITION BUILDING THAT I REALIZED I DIDN'T HAVE THE FIRST CLUE HOW TO ***IRRADIATE A SPIDER*** -- AND EVEN THOUGH THEY'D KEPT YOUR LITTLE PAL TO STUDY, HE WAS IN NO SHAPE TO BITE ANYONE...

"WHICH LEFT PLAN ***B***."

CHOMP

NOTHING HAPPENED FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS. I STARTED TO WONDER -- I MEAN ***RADIOACTIVE SPIDERS,*** WHAT KIND OF NONSENSE WAS THAT, REALLY?

THEN, ONE MORNING...

YAAAAHHH...

--UH?

CARL, YOUR BREAKFAST'S ON THE TABLE! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE FOR SCHOOL IF YOU DON'T GET A MOVE ON!

CARL?

CARL, WHAT ARE YOU --

GAAK

I DID IT TOTALLY BY INSTINCT. AS NATURAL AS OPENING YOUR EYES.

I HAD NO IDEA OF WHAT I WAS, OR WHAT MY BODY'D BECOME, OR WHAT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO. I DIDN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.

"THEN I STARTED TO GET THE IDEA. MY BODY'D BEEN BREAKING DOWN, CONSUMING ITSELF, CHANGING INTO -- LITERALLY -- A THOUSAND SPIDERS. ***THEY*** HELD MY CONSCIOUSNESS NOW, NOT SOME PUNY HUMAN SHELL, AND THEY COULD GO ALMOST ANYWHERE...

"SO NATURALLY I WONDERED IF I COULD DO IT AGAIN.

"THAT NIGHT, IN BED WITH DAD, THE SECOND TIME WAS EVEN EASIER."

EVERY TIME I DID IT I COULD BREAK THEIR INNARDS UP A LITTLE FASTER.

EVERY TIME I DID IT I GOT A LITTLE STRONGER.

YOUR OWN PARENTS...

WELL, YOU REMEMBER WHAT A ROTTEN KID I WAS, PARKER. IT'S HARDLY SURPRISING I TURNED OUT TO BE A ROTTEN SUPER-VILLAIN TOO.

A *SUPER-VILLAIN?*

I THINK I FIT THE PROFILE.

I GUESS I SHOULD KNOW.

YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN VOICE. YOU STRUT AROUND SMIRKING LIKE A TWO-YEAR-OLD WHO'S JUST GRADUATED POTTY TRAINING. YOU CAN'T RESIST LAYING OUT EVERY DETAIL OF YOUR DESCENT INTO EVIL AND YOUR BIG, BAD PLAN...

AND YOU GET SO INTO IT YOU FORGET YOUR PARALYZING POISON IS ABOUT TO WEAR OFF.

RRAAAARRRGHH!

I REMEMBER YOU, CARL --

NOT QUITE THE SAME WAY YOU DO --

YOU THINK THE KIDS AT SCHOOL ***LIKED YOU?*** YOU THINK THEY LIKED THAT YOU PICKED ON KIDS LIKE ***ME?***

YOU WERE ***PATHETIC,*** CARL! YOU DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS! YOU WERE TERRIFIED OF GIRLS! ALL YOU KNEW WAS ***CRUELTY*** AND ***FEAR,*** AND MAKING PEOPLE NERVOUS TO GET YOURSELF ATTENTION!

AND LOOK HOW FAR YOU'VE COME, CARL!

YOU'RE JUST THE SAME OLD SADIST YOU ALWAYS WERE!!

LIAR!

THAT'S NOT HOW IT WAS AT ALL!

YOU TAKE THAT BACK, YOU HEAR?!

YOU THINK YOU CAN STAND IN JUDGMENT ON ME?! YOU WITH YOUR PERFECT LIFE! YOU, WHO GOT HANDED THE WORLD ON A PLATE, WHEN MY LIFE GOT TURNED INTO HELL!

MR. BIG SHOT SUPER HERO WITH HIS SPIDER POWERS, WHEN IT COULD JUST AS EASILY ALL HAVE BEEN MINE! IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN **ME**, PARKER!

UNNH!

AAAAAHH...!

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN MEEEEE!!

KERRUUNCH!

YOU SELF-RIGHTEOUS LITTLE TOAD, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW ***EASY*** YOU'VE HAD IT...

BUT I DO. I'VE BEEN WATCHING.

THE DEATH-DEFYING EXPLOITS. THE LETHAL ARRAY OF COLORFUL VILLAINS. THE STRING OF BEAUTIFUL GIRLFRIENDS -- ALL BECAUSE SOME ***NERD*** GETS BITTEN BY A ***SPIDER?***

YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO ***MY*** BEAUTIFUL GIRLFRIEND, PARKER...?

I HAD TO ***EAT HER.***

LYING...

DIDN'T... ***HAVE TO...*** DO ANYTHING...

OH, SHUT UP.

I HAD TO EAT HER JUST LIKE I HAD TO EAT THE OTHERS, PARKER. EVERY LITTLE HUMAN ***NOTHING*** I ATE MADE ME THAT BIT STRONGER.

AND I KNEW I'D HAVE TO BE ***VERY STRONG INDEED*** WHEN THE TIME CAME TO TAKE YOU DOWN...

OTHERS...?

ABOUT A DOZEN A YEAR.

BUMS, MOSTLY.

NOW AND AGAIN THE ODD CHILD.

NOOO...!

YEP.

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES, ISN'T IT?

POOR LITTLE PETER SQUIRMING ON THE GROUND, TERRIFIED OF WHAT NASTY OLD CARL MIGHT DO TO HIM NEXT... OH, IT'S BEEN SUCH A LONG TIME, AND LITTLE PETER'S GROWN UP AND GOTTEN ***SUPERPOWERS*** -- BUT REALLY, HE CAN'T DISGUISE WHAT HE IS AT HEART...

A PATHETIC... TERRIFIED... WRETCHED... LITTLE...

WORM.

CARL.

Uh --?

I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU AT ALL.

DANGER

BUT --

LET'S GO.

WHY YOU LITTLE --

AAAK

EEEIIIGGGHH!

YOU -- I'LL -- AAAAAAAHH! AAAAAAHHH!

MY LIFE ISN'T PERFECT, CARL.

FAR FROM IT.

AND I COULD DO WITHOUT THE DEATH-DEFYING EXPLOITS AND THE COLORFUL VILLAINS, IF I'M COMPLETELY HONEST WITH YOU.

ALL I WANT IS TO DO A LITTLE BIT OF GOOD.

LET'S GO.

YOU'LL DO --

NOTHING --

I'M TAKING YOUR *LIFE*, PARKER!

AAAAH --!

I'LL DRAIN YOU DRY! I'LL WEAR YOUR HIDE LIKE A *COAT!*

I'LL MAKE YOUR PERFECT LIFE MY OWN -- JUST LIKE IT WAS ALWAYS MEANT TO BE!

CARL KING, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN!

AAAAAHHH!

UH -- AAAOW --

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN *ME*, PARKER...

YOU HEAR ME... *VERMIN*...

CARL, NO --

SHOULD HAVE BEEN --

DON'T --

ME

NNNN

NOOOOOOOOO

...GOODBYE, CARL.

GOD FORGIVE YOU.

YOU SAD, SAD FOOL.

FOUR FLIGHTS OF STAIRS? Oh, PETER, I DO WISH YOU'D BE MORE CAREFUL...!

I'M FINE, AUNT MAY. REALLY I AM.

LISTEN, THANKS A LOT FOR LETTING ME STAY. IT'S JUST 'TIL MY PLACE GET'S FIXED UP -- I MEAN I'D'VE TOLD YOU, BUT THE LANDLORD KIND OF SPRANG IT ON US...

YOU KNOW YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE, PETER.

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR OLD ROOM.

MAN, I'M TIRED...

THAT'S MY BOY.

BACK FROM THE WARS.

WANT TO DANCE?

♪ THEY CALL ♫ IT THE JERSEY BOUNCE... ♫

♫ THE RHYTHM ♪ THAT REALLY ♫ COUNTS... ♫

♪ THE TEMPERATURE ALWAYS ♫ MOUNTS... ♫

♪ WHENEVER ♫ THEY PLAY, THAT CRAZY RHYTHM ♫ THEY PLAY... ♪

YOU THINK I'M FINISHED, PARKER?

ME?

THE THOUSAND?

JUST *ONE* IS ENOUGH TO HOLD MY ESSENCE, PARKER. ENOUGH TO SURVIVE, AND GROW STRONG...

TO BIDE MY TIME...

TO STOKE MY HATRED...

AND WHEN THE TIME COMES, TO EMERGE ONCE MORE AND CLAIM WHAT'S ***MINE.***

IT SHOULD --

HAVE BEEN ME --

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME!

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME!

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME!

SQUITCH

JFC

LEARN
KUNG FU
VIDEO
THE END

PART 4

RRRNNG RRRNNNG

Oh FOR THE *LOVE* OF *MIKE* --

-- IT'S PAST *ELEVEN!*

COCHRANE RESIDENCE.

BRIAN. DO YOU KNOW *WHAT* TIME IT IS? WE *JUST* GOT THE *BABY* DOWN --

YES, BUT HE'S *BRUSHING* HIS *TEETH* --

...HOLD ON.

IT'S BRIAN. TELL HIM NOT TO *CALL* SO *LATE.*

BRIAN? IT'S TOM. WHAT --

...

WHAT CHANNEL?

JUST A *SEC...*

-- DRAMATIC FOOTAGE OF THE ARRESTS MADE JUST **HOURS** AGO IN THE **BRONX.**

A SPOKESPERSON FROM ONE POLICE PLAZA PUTS THE CAPTURED WEAPONS IN THE **'MILLIONS OF DOLLARS'** RANGE.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE ARRESTS, THE POLICE CITED A 'CONCERNED **CITIZEN'**...

...ONE THAT **OUR CAMERAS** CAPTURED HERE, JUST MOMENTS AFTER THE **ARRESTS.**

CHK

...NO, I'M STILL HERE, BRIAN.

YES.

YES.

...YES.

IT WAS NICE KNOWING YOU, TOO, BRIAN.

MY BEST TO YOUR FAMILY.

HON?

THAT THING ON THE *NEWS*, THAT WASN'T *YOU*, WAS IT...?

I PUT IT TOGETHER FOR HIM.

YOU'VE WORKED FOR HIM FOR *TWENTY YEARS*, TOM...

...THAT'S *GOT* TO COUNT FOR *SOMETHING*.

WHAT I DID FOR MISTER FISK *YESTERDAY* DOESN'T MATTER.

IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT WHAT I DID FOR HIM *TODAY*.

AND TODAY I *FAILED*.

BUT IT'S *NOT* YOUR *FAULT!* IT'S THAT DAMN *SPIDER-MA--*

RRRNNG RRRNNNG

GREG RUCKA
WRITER
EDUARDO RISSO
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STEVE BUCCELLATO
COLORS
RICHARD STARKINGS &
COMICRAFT'S WES ABBOTT
LETTERS
JOHN MIESEGAES
ASSISTANT EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO
EDITOR
JOE QUESADA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
BILL JEMAS
PRESIDENT

STAN LEE
PRESENTS:

SEVERANCE PACKAGE

RRRNNNG RRNN

TOM COCHRANE.

YES, SIR. THANK YOU.

HE'S SENDING ***RITCHIE*** WITH A CAR. IT'LL BE ABOUT AN ***HOUR.***

I'M GOING TO SHOWER.

Gillette

I...

...I LAID OUT YOUR NEW ARMANI.

THANKS, HON.

TWENTY YEARS AND HE SENDS THAT *LOSER* RITCHIE TO PICK YOU UP, HE DOESN'T EVEN SEND *BRIAN.*

HE HAS HIS *REASONS.*

IT'S NOT *FAIR.*

IT'S *NOT* FAIR, TOM!

CALM DOWN, SHELLY.

HOW CAN YOU EVEN *SAY* THAT?

HE'S GOING TO *KILL* YOU, TOM! YOU *KNOW* THAT.

YEAH.

...YEAH, HE *IS.*

COULD I GET A CUP OF COFFEE BEFORE I GO?

SUPER HERO

HOW ARE THE BOYS?

SLEEPING.

THANKS FOR MAKING THE COFFEE.

YOU'RE WELCOME.

DO YOU *REALLY* THINK I HADN'T ALREADY *THOUGHT* OF THAT?

DAMN YOU!

HOW CAN YOU JUST *SIT* THERE, HOW CAN YOU BE SO *CALM?*

YOU'VE GOT TWO *BOYS,* FOR GOD'S SAKE, TOM! WHAT ABOUT *THEM?*

WHAT ABOUT *ME?*

YOU'LL WAKE THE BOYS --

I DON'T *CARE!*

YOU'RE JUST GOING TO *LET* HIM DO THIS? YOU'RE JUST GOING TO GO LIKE SOME *LAMB* TO THE *SLAUGHTER?*

IT'S THE WAY IT *WORKS,* SHELLY.

WE KNEW THAT WHEN I *STARTED.*

YOU COULD *RUN!* YOU COULD GO TO THE *COPS* --

I *CAN'T.*

WE *KNEW* IT COULD *END* THIS WAY --

DING DONG

NO. NOT YET.

I HAVE TO GO.

NO, PLEASE --

STOP.

YOU'VE GOT THE NUMBERS FOR THE ***SWISS*** ACCOUNTS. BETWEEN ***THOSE*** AND THE ***STOCKS***, THAT'S NEARLY ***TEN MILLION***.

YOU AND THE BOYS WILL BE ***ALL*** RIGHT.

AND YOU'LL BE ***DEAD***.

I LOVED YOU WITH ALL MY HEART, SHELL.

NEVER FORGET THAT.

I'M SUPPOSED TO *DRIVE*, MISTER COCHRANE.

THAT'S FINE, RITCHIE.

ANY TROUBLE GETTING OUT HERE?

THIS TIME OF NIGHT? NAH, THE ROADS WERE *DEAD*.

YOU GOT THAT *CHINATOWN* THING FIXED?

Uh...NO, IT *DIDN'T* WORK OUT.

BUT MISTER FISK SAID I DESERVE A *SECOND CHANCE*.

SAYS IT'S BECAUSE I'M *YOUNG*, I'LL *LEARN*.

JUST HOW OLD *ARE* YOU, RITCHIE?

I'M EIGHTEEN, MISTER COCHRANE.

I REMEMBER EIGHTEEN...

...I THOUGHT I WAS *INVINCIBLE.*

HEY, I *AM* INVINCIBLE.

I'M GONNA LIVE *FOREVER.*

SURE, RITCHIE...

...*YOU* AND MISTER FISK *BOTH.*

QUARTZ WATCHES

NEW Rita's

AcWA

DATE SHOW

HOWARD JOHNSONS

NY-B54!1

BANK

I'M SUPPOSED TO SEE YOU *UP* --

IT WON'T BE NECESSARY, RITCHIE.

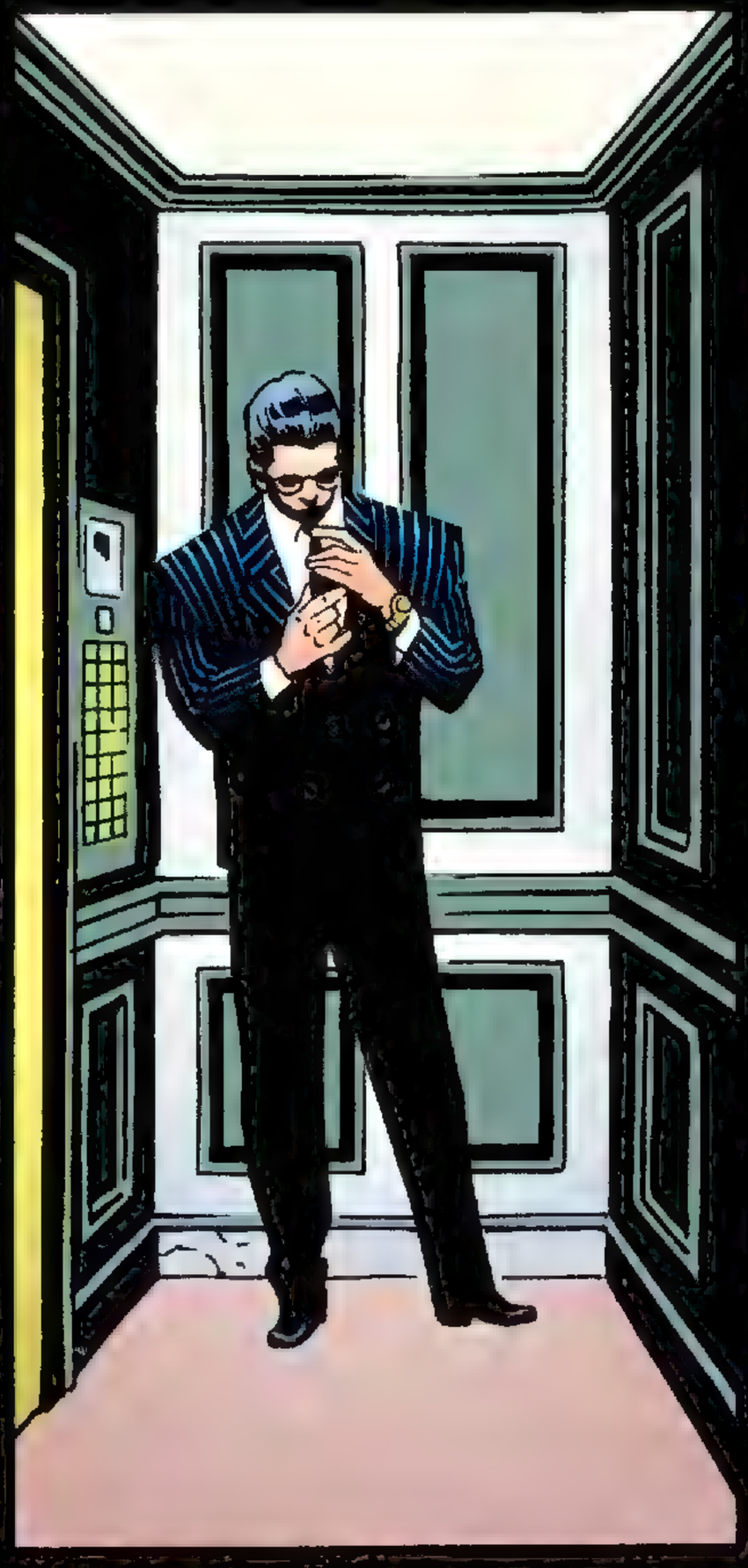
YEAH, WELL, THE ORDER CAME FROM *HIM*, SO --

THERE ARE NO *SECOND CHANCES*, KID.

BLAM

DING

YES?
PH
TOM COCHRANE. MISTER FISK ASKED ME TO COME BY.
JUST A SEC'.



L↑2
YOU'RE EXPECTED...
...WHEN YOU GET TO THE TOP --
I KNOW THE WAY.

DING
PH

NOK NOK

ENTER.

TOM.

SORRY I'M LATE, SIR.

I WAS GETTING READY FOR ***BED*** WHEN THE ***CALL*** CAME.

YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE, TOM?

YES, SIR. BRIAN TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED.

THEN I SAW IT ON THE NEWS. THEY HAD A ***PICTURE*** OF ***SPIDER-MAN.***

UNFORTUNATE.

IT WAS *MY* FAULT.

I DIDN'T TAKE HIM INTO ACCOUNT.

YOU ALWAYS TOOK *RESPONSIBILITY* FOR YOUR ACTIONS, TOM.

I APPRECIATE THAT IN A MAN.

YOU TOOK THAT FROM RITCHIE?

YES, SIR. AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH HIS CHINATOWN SALE...WELL, I FIGURED THAT WAS WHY YOU SENT HIM AND *NOT* BRIAN.

HE'S IN THE *CAR*. I SHOT HIM IN THE *HEAD*.

RESPONSIBLE AS *EVER*.

I THOUGHT... I THOUGHT ABOUT TRYING TO ***RUN*** OR ***FIGHT.***

EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT KILLING ***MYSELF.***

BUT THAT'S NEVER BEEN PART OF OUR ***AGREEMENT.***

NO.

WHO'D YOU SEND TO MY HOUSE?

O'REILLY.

I KNOW I LET YOU DOWN TONIGHT, BUT I'VE MADE THIS AS ***EASY*** AS POSSIBLE, MR. FISK.

I EVEN TOOK CARE OF RITCHIE FOR YOU.

I'VE ***NEVER*** ASKED FOR ANY ***FAVORS,*** BUT I'M ASKING FOR ONE ***NOW...***

...PLEASE LET MY FAMILY ***LIVE.***

MOVE TO THE FRONT OF THE DESK.

YES, SIR.

THE STORY WILL BE THAT WHEN I FIRED YOU, YOU ***SNAPPED.***

YOU ***STOLE*** RITCHIE'S GUN, THEN ***KILLED*** HIM.

THEN YOU BROKE IN HERE AND TRIED TO KILL ME.

I DEFENDED MYSELF.

I UNDERSTAND.

ATTACK.

BLAM BLAM BLAM

GOOD, TOM.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT SHELLY AND THE BOYS...

I'LL BE **RESPONSIBLE,** TOO.

HELLO?

IT'S ME.

DO I GO IN?

NO.

LEAVE THE COCHRANE FAMILY **ALONE.**

THEY'RE **DONE.**

THE END

PART 5

THEY'LL HEAR IT SOON.

THEY'LL HEAR IT ANY SECOND NOW.

UNLESS THEY'RE ***DEAF.***

YOU'RE MAKING A TERRIBLE MISTAKE! MY FATHER IS A LEGITIMATE ***BUSINESSMAN!***

YOUR FATHER IS IN THE ***BUSINESS*** OF TAKING OVER MY LEGITIMATE ***ILLEGITIMATE OPERATIONS.***

BUT NOW THAT WE'VE GOT HIS LITTLE PRIDE 'N' JOY, HE'LL HAVE TO --

WHICH THEY PROBABLY ***AIN'T.***

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT ***NOISE?*** IS THERE A ***SUBWAY*** UNDER HERE?

IF THERE'S ONE THING I WON'T EVER GET TIRED OF...

...IT'S RUNNING THROUGH WALLS.

ARE YOU *STELLA?*

Uh, YES.

STELLA *PAVLOV?*

YES!

SORRY. HAVE TO MAKE SURE I'M ***RESCUING*** THE RIGHT ***GIRL.***

I'M HERE TO TAKE YOU ***HOME,*** STELLA PAVLOV.

SHE'S THE KIND OF PRETTY THAT ***HURTS.*** LOOKS LIKE SHE'D BREAK IF YOU HELD HER HAND.

DAMN. IF ***I*** HELD HER HAND SHE PROBABLY ***WOULD*** BREAK.

WHO... WHO ***ARE*** YOU?

I'M RHINO.

I KNOCK THINGS DOWN.

THAT'S WHAT I DO.

THAT'S WHO I AM.

flowers for rhino part one:

RHINOCRASH

PETER MILLIGAN
WRITER

DUNCAN FEGREDO
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STEVE BUCCELLATO
COLORS

RS/COMICRAFT'S WES
LETTERS

JOHN MIESEGAES ASS'T ED AXEL ALONSO EDITOR JOE QUESADA CHIEF BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT

AND NOW SHE'S *SMILING* AT ME. AND WHAT A SMILE! IT DOES SOMETHING FUNNY SOMEWHERE DEEP UNDER MY HIDE.

IT CUTS RIGHT *THROUGH* ME.

THIS IS FREAKY. I MEAN, NORMALLY IT TAKES A FEW STICKS OF DYNAMITE AND AN OIL DRILLING RIG TO GET UNDER MY CRUST.

THEN I REALIZE...

...SHE AIN'T SMILING AT ME AT ALL.

MIGHT'VE GUESSED.

SHE'S PROBABLY WISHING SHE COULD'VE BEEN SAVED BY *HIM*.

THE *GOOD* GUY.

STELLA, GET IN. *NOW!*

ROMEO, I WANT SOME ANSWERS!

LATER, STELLA!

BUT THEY SAID PAPA WAS --

LATER!

RHINO, YOU'D BETTER MAKE SURE WE'RE NOT FOLLOWED BY SPIDER-MAN. WORD IS HE'S BEEN TRACKING THAT GANG WHO KIDNAPPED STELLA.

MAKE SURE YOU LOOK GOOD, MAN. YOU'RE GOING TO BE ON TV!

Ah, SURE THING, ROMEO.

'BYE, STELLA.

ARHGHHH!

IT AIN'T MY SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH AND RHINO HORN THAT GETS ME OUT OF THAT DAMNED SPIDER'S WEB.

IT'S A ***SMILE.***

THE MEMORY OF THE ***SMILE*** THAT STELLA GAVE TO ***SPIDER-MAN.***

GIRLS DON'T SMILE LIKE THAT AT ***ME.*** NEVER HAVE, NEVER WILL.

THE KIND OF GIRL ***I*** HANG WITH DON'T TEND TO SMILE MUCH AT ALL.

UNLESS YOU PAY THEM ***EXTRA.***

I'M GOING TO SQUASH THAT SPIDER.

FINALLY.

SQUASH HIM FOR ***GOOD.***

SQUASH HIM WITH A...

SMILE!

WEBBING.

THICK.

STICKY.

I'M STUCK.

I AM SO STUCK.

YOU'RE ON CANDID CAMERA!

HEY, LARRY. I THINK WE'RE GONNA NEED A WIDE-ANGLE LENS!

HAH! HAH! HAH!

Oh BOY! THIS GUY MUST GO DOWN AS THE DUMBEST SO-CALLED SUPER-VILLAIN AROUND!

ALAS, POOR RHINO...

FORGET ABOUT THAT CREATURE. IS IT TRUE, ROMEO?

IS PAPA...IS MY FATHER...A GANGSTER?

HEY, STELLA, WHAT CAN I SAY?

YOU'D THINK YOU'D GET ***USED*** TO IT. BUT YOU ***DON'T.***

THE LAUGHTER. THE LITTLE JOKES THAT I DON'T ***GET,*** BUT I KNOW ARE AIMED AT ME.

IT AIN'T EASY, BEING A GUY WRAPPED INSIDE FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS OF *"NEAR-IMPREGNABLE, CHEMICALLY AND RADIOACTIVELY-TREATED"* **RHINO HIDE.**

SURE, BEING LIKE THIS HAS ITS ***REWARDS,*** LIKE BEING ABLE TO KILL PEOPLE YOU DON'T LIKE REAL EASY. BUT IT AIN'T ALL FUN AND GAMES.

JEEZ, EVEN ROCKET RACER AND THE GIBBON ARE LAUGHING AT ME. THEY SHOULDN'T EVEN ***BE*** IN A HIGH-SECURITY PRISON.

THE LAST TIME THOSE HAS-BEENS HAD A BUST-UP WITH A ***LEGITIMATE*** SUPER HERO, IT WAS BACK IN BLACK AND WHITE.

A PITY THOSE SCIENTISTS WHO GAVE ME MY SUPER-TOUGH SKIN DIDN'T DO SOMETHING TO TOUGHEN UP MY ***HEART.***

WRAP ***IT*** UP IN ROCK AND METAL SO NOTHING CAN GET THROUGH IT.

HEY, ***EINSTEIN,*** GOT YOU A NEWSPAPER.

IF YOU CAN'T READ THE ***WORDS,*** YOU SHOULD FIND THE ***PICTURES*** ENTERTAINING.

DAILY BUGLE

RHINO GOT 'BACK'!

HORNED DOLT CAPTURED BY SPIDERMAN!

I'M SICK OF THIS.

I'M SICK OF THE SIGHT OF MY OWN SKIN.

I'M SICK OF THE ***WEIGHT*** OF IT. THE ***SMELL*** OF IT, THE ***TOUCH*** OF IT.

IT'S A ***PRISON.***

MY OWN SKIN'S A PRISON!

AND I ***WANT OUT!***

Ah... RH...RHINO... HEY...NO HARD FEELINGS, RIGHT? I MEAN WE'RE JUST HAVING A LITTLE *JOKE* HERE, YEAH?

NO HARM IN HAVING... A LITTLE... LAUGH...

PEOPLE LIKE YOU, THE GOOD-LOOKING ONES, THE CLEVER ONES, THE ONES WHO WEIGH UNDER TWO HUNDRED POUNDS...YOU DON'T REALIZE THAT WORDS HURT.

Oh MAN, THEY CAN HURT JUST AS MUCH AS A BUTT-KICKING.

OKAY, MAYBE NOT *QUITE* AS MUCH AS A BUTT-KICKING.

DUHH DU DUH
DUHH DUH

I DON'T GET OFF ON THAT *FANCY* KIND OF MUSIC. I PREFER *POLKAS.*

THAT *FANCY KIND OF MUSIC* IS THE HAUNTING FINAL *ADAGIO* OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S *"PATHETIQUE"* IN B MINOR.

THE CONDUCTOR IS A CHIMPANZEE WHOSE BRAIN WE'VE OPERATED ON TO *INCREASE INTELLIGENCE.*

EEE!

EEE! EEE! EEE! EEE!

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE EXPERIMENT IS IN ITS VERY *EARLY* STAGES.

NOW, RHINO, WHAT DO YOU *WANT?*

I WANT...

I WANT...

...DIGNITY.

...?

SORRY, RHINO. I MEAN, IF YOU'D ASKED FOR THE ABILITY TO CREATE TINY SUPERNOVAS OUT OF THIN AIR, WE ***MIGHT*** HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HELP YOU.

BUT ***DIGNITY?!*** WE DON'T GET MUCH CALL FOR THAT KIND OF THING. NOT FROM ***OUR*** CLIENT BASE, ANYWAY.

YOU GOTTA ***HELP*** ME! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE IN THIS BIG, STUPID, CLUMSY THING!

YOU ASKED FOR YOUR SKIN TO BE HARDENED! YOU WANTED YOUR HORN! ***REMEMBER,*** RHINO, YOU WERE JUST ANOTHER PUNK BEFORE WE MODIFIED YOU.

JUST ANOTHER SMALL-TIME MUSCLE-MAN WORKING FOR PEANUTS. YOU ***JUMPED*** AT THE CHANCE OF BEING A SUPERHUMAN ASSASSIN!

I ***KNOW*** THAT...AND I KNOW THIS SKIN HAS BEEN GOOD TO ME. BUT NOW IT'S LIKE... I WANT SOMETHING ***MORE.***

GOD SAVE ME. A SUPER-VILLAIN WITH A MID-LIFE CRISIS.

AND HOW, ***EXACTLY,*** DO YOU PROPOSE WE GIVE YOU THIS DIGNITY, RHINO? GRAFT IT ONTO YOUR ***SPINE?*** INJECT IT INTO YOUR ***EYEBALLS?***

I WANT YOU TO ***TAKE MY HIDE OFF.***

I WANT TO BE ***DE***-RHINOED.

YOU ***KNEW*** THAT YOUR HIDE WOULD BE ***PERMANENT.***

BUT I FIGURED, WHAT WITH THE ADVANCES IN SCIENCE N' STUFF...THERE'S GOTTA BE ***SOME*** WAY...SOME KIND OF ***LASER BEAM*** OR SOMETHIN'...

IF WE ***COULD*** FIND SOME WAY OF ***HACKING*** OR ***BURNING*** YOUR SKIN OFF, WE WOULD, WITHOUT A DOUBT, ***KILL*** YOU IN THE PROCESS.

LEARN TO LOVE YOUR ***THICK SKIN*** AGAIN, RHINO.

YOU'RE ***STUCK*** WITH IT.

LOVE YOUR THICK SKIN, HE SAYS.

WELL, HE SHOULD TRY ***SLEEPING*** IN IT.

THE REINFORCED CONCRETE BED. THE MATTRESS STUFFED WITH METAL FILINGS.

THE PULLEYS AND TROLLEYS THAT I NEED IN CASE I ROLL OVER ONTO MY BACK AND CAN'T GET UP AGAIN.

THE CELLAR WHERE I HAVE TO LIVE, SO I DON'T FORGET MYSELF AND END UP FALLING THROUGH THE FLOOR TO THE APARTMENT BELOW.

I SUDDENLY NEED TO GET OUT. ALL THIS BROODING AND THINKING AND STUFF, IT DOESN'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.

IT ISN'T ***NATURAL.***

TO CHEER MYSELF UP, I PUT ON A CD BY DAN KOWALSKI AND HIS POLKA PARTNERS.

I SHOWER, BRUSH MY TEETH, BURNISH MY HORN, EXFOLIATE MY SKIN WITH A BLOWTORCH, AND DOUSE MYSELF WITH A LITTLE COLOGNE.

HORN

AND GUESS WHAT?

TWO HOURS LATER AND I'M MORE MISERABLE THAN EVER.

I KNOW THEY'RE ***LAUGHING*** AT ME. BEHIND MY BACK. TO MY FACE. EVERY WHICH WAY.

I SPEND ALMOST TWO HUNDRED BUCKS BUYING DRINKS FOR GIRLS WHO I KNOW DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ME.

BUT MAYBE IF I SPEND ENOUGH ON THEM, THEY'LL ***START*** TO GIVE A DAMN.

HEY, RHINO.

WHAT'RE ***YOU*** DOING HERE?

LOOKING FOR ***YOU***, BIG GUY. MY BOSS, HE WANTS TO TALK. IT'S ABOUT A VERY IMPORTANT JOB.

I DUNNO, ROMEO. I'M KINDA THINKING OF RETIRING FROM THAT LINE OF WORK FOR A WHILE. IT AIN'T GIVING ME THE JOB SATISFACTION IT USED TO.

THAT'S A REAL SHAME. BECAUSE HE'S REALLY WORRIED ABOUT ***STELLA***. AND HE WANTED YOUR HELP WITH HER.

STELLA.

LET ME SHAKE THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO SAVED MY DAUGHTER!

MY NAME'S FYODOR. FYODOR ***REBROV.***

BUT STELLA'S LAST NAME... IS ***PAVLOV.***

DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, RHINO. IT'S ***COMPLICATED.***

DON'T PAT... PUT... PUTOR...

I THINK THE WORD YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS ***"PATRONIZE."***

THAT'S THE WORD! DON'T DO THAT WORD TO ME, ROMEO. I'M ***SICK*** OF IT!

HEY. HEY, GUYS. WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME SIDE HERE.

THING IS, RHINO. I'VE TRIED TO DISTANCE MY DAUGHTER FROM MY...BUSINESS AFFAIRS. PAVLOV IS HER ***MOTHER'S*** NAME.

SO... WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ***ME?***

QUITE SIMPLE: MY ENEMIES NOW KNOW ***WHO STELLA IS.*** THAT MAKES ME -- AND MORE IMPORTANTLY HER -- ***VULNERABLE.*** I WANT YOU TO WATCH OVER HER...UNTIL THIS PRESENT NASTINESS IS OVER.

SURE...

ON ***ONE CONDITION:***

SEE, WHAT WITH ALL THE ***BAD PRESS*** YOU'VE BEEN GETTING... YOU GOTTA ***PROVE*** YOU'RE ***UP TO*** THE TASK.

STELLA IS PRESENTLY BEING GUARDED BY SOME OF OUR BOYS. IF YOU CAN ***DISPOSE*** OF THEM, YOU'VE GOT THE JOB.

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I SAW HER, ALL TIED-UP AND SCARED.

I REMEMBER HER SMILE, EVEN THOUGH IT ***WASN'T*** FOR ME.

AND SEEING HER AGAIN IS ABOUT THE ONLY THING I CAN THINK OF THAT'S WORTH DOING.

STELLA!

STELLA!

OH GOD, DON'T TELL ME. PAPA SENT YOU TO PROTECT ME.

Ah, YEAH... SHOULDN'T YOU BE...

COOPED UP INSIDE? YEAH, BUT I SNEAKED OUT THE BACK. PAPA'S GORILLAS DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE.

YEAH, WELL, *I'M* WATCHING OVER YOU NOW.

EXCUSE ME, YOU'RE DOING NO SUCH THING. I'VE TOLD MY FATHER I DON'T WANT ANYTHING MORE TO DO WITH HIM, OR HIS ***HENCHMEN***.

MY FATHER'S A ***GANGSTER***. HE'S HEAD OF AN ORGANIZATION INVOLVED IN GUN-RUNNING, PROSTITUTION, ARMED ROBBERY AND CONTRACT KILLING.

MUST BE SWELL TO HAVE A DAD LIKE THAT.

IT IS NOT ***SWELL***, YOU IDIOT! IT IS ANYTHING BUT ***SWELL***.

WHAT I ***MEANT*** WAS...

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU MEANT. AND WHY ARE YOU ***LOOKING*** AT ME LIKE THAT?

NO... NO REASON.

LISTEN. DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY THEY CHOSE YOU TO WATCH OVER ME?

BECAUSE I'M GOOD AT MY JOB?

JESUS, YOU'RE EVEN MORE STUPID THAN YOU LOOK -- AND BELIEVE ME, THAT'S ***QUITE*** AN ACHIEVEMENT.

MY FATHER IS ***PARANOID***. HE'S SEEING PLOTS AGAINST HIM EVERYWHERE! BUT YOU'RE SO DUMB AND PREDICTABLE, HE KNOWS YOU WOULDN'T EVEN ***THINK*** OF DOUBLE-CROSSING HIM!

AND IF YOU ***DID*** THINK IT, YOU'D BE TOO STUPID TO ***DO*** ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

AND ***ROMEO*** -- WHO IS A VERY JEALOUS MAN, AND VERY MUCH IN LOVE WITH ME -- HE WANTED YOU TO DO THIS JOB BECAUSE HE KNOWS YOU'D BE SO INCREDIBLY ***UNATTRACTIVE*** TO ME THAT HE'D HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

WELL? AREN'T YOU GOING TO ***SAY*** ANYTHING? I'VE JUST ***INSULTED*** YOU! SHOULDN'T YOU ***HIT*** ME? OR ***GOUGE*** ME WITH YOUR HORN? ISN'T THAT THE WAY YOU PEOPLE REACT TO SOMETHING YOU DON'T LIKE?

I DON'T WANT TO HIT YOU.

HEY, LOOK, I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE SO NASTY. IT'S JUST THAT I'M UPSET ABOUT FINDING ALL THIS OUT ABOUT MY FATHER.

NO NEED TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY. YOU'RE RIGHT. I ***AM*** MORE STUPID THAN I LOOK.

WAY MORE STUPID.

NO.

NOPE.

UH-UH.

NOTHING.

NOT A *THING.*

FACE IT, RHINO.

EVEN ***RUNNING THROUGH WALLS*** DON'T DO IT FOR YOU NO MORE.

I GUESS IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE RHINO BECAME... ***EXTANCT.***

...STINCT?

!

I ALWAYS KIND OF FIGURED I'D END UP BEING KILLED BY SPIDER-MAN OR THE FANTASTIC FOUR, YOU KNOW?

THOUGH WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE WAY US SUPER-POWERED GUYS GO AROUND KNOCKING THE HOLY HELL OUT OF EACH OTHER, IT'S SURPRISING THERE AIN'T ***MORE FATALITIES.***

I AIN'T SCARED. NEVER WAS SCARED OF DYING.

PROBABLY TOO STUPID.

MAYBE I SHOULD TRY TO HIT THE BARGE. TAKE SOME OF THOSE LUCKY SNAKES WITH ME.

LOOK AT THEM. WITH THEIR LAUGHTER, THEIR WINE GLASSES, THEIR FANCY CLOTHES, THEIR ***FANCY MUSIC...***

FANCY MUSIC.

"I PREFER POLKAS MYSELF."

GOT TO BE ***SMART*** TO LIKE ***FANCY MUSIC...***

SMARTER THAN ***RHINO...***

RHINO, THIS IS JUST STUPID!

IT'S ***BECAUSE*** I'M STUPID THAT I WANT THE ***OPERATION,*** DOC. DO TO ME WHAT YOU DID TO THAT CHIMP.

BUT THE EXPERIMENTS ARE IN THEIR EARLY STAGES! THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG!

I'M WILLING TO TAKE THAT ***CHANCE.***

C'MON, DOC. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE AN EVIL GENIUS. DO YOUR STUFF!

AT LEAST LET ME GIVE YOU A ***GENERAL ANESTHETIC!***

NO WAY. I WANNA MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MESS ME AROUND. I'M GOING TO BE WATCHING YOU RIGHT THROUGH THE WHOLE OPERATION.

ANYWAY. I SEEN *"HANNIBAL"* -- I KNOW THE BRAIN AIN'T GOT NO FEELING.

BUT YOUR ***SKULL*** DOES! AND IT WON'T BE EASY, GETTING THROUGH A SKULL LIKE ***YOURS.***

I DON'T CARE. JUST ***DO*** IT! NOW! BEFORE ***I*** OPEN UP ***YOUR SKULL*** WITH MY ***BARE HANDS!***

ALL RIGHT, IF IT'S ***REALLY*** WHAT YOU WANT.

THIS MIGHT HURT.

OKAY!

START HER UP!

PART 6

TWO DAYS AFTER MY ***BRAIN OPERATION*** AND I STILL DON'T FEEL NO CLEVERER.

OKAY, RHINO. YOU CAN TAKE THE ***BLINDFOLD*** OFF.

I WANT TO SEE HOW QUICKLY YOU FIND YOUR WAY OUT OF THE ***MAZE.***

I KEEP TRYING TO THINK SMART THOUGHTS BUT IT'S LIKE THEY DON'T WANNA COME.

BUT I DIDN'T SEE HOW I GOT HERE!

THAT'S THE ***POINT!*** TRY TO ***REMEMBER*** WHICH WAY YOU WERE LED IN. WORK BACKWARDS.

UH... IT WAS THAT WAY... NO... MAYBE... MAYBE IT WAS... ***THAT*** WAY...

THINK, RHINO. USE YOUR ***HEAD.***

MY ***HEAD.*** ***NOW*** I GOTCHA.

flowers for rhino part two: CORNUCOPIA

PETER MILLIGAN WRITER

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AS/COMICRAFT'S JIMMY LETTERS

JOHN MIESEGAES ASSISTANT EDITOR
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HEY, DOC! MAYBE I *AM* GETTING SMARTER AFTER ALL!

DESPITE MY HEADACHE, I GOTTA READ THE NEWSPAPERS, AND MUSTN'T START AT THE SPORTS PAGES, WHICH IS PRETTY WEIRD.

THERE'RE LOADSA ***WORDS*** I DON'T GET, SO THEY GIVE ME A ***DICTIONARY.***

HAVE YOU ***SEEN*** ONE OF THESE THINGS? JEEZ! THEY GOTTA WORD FOR JUST ABOUT ***EVERYTHING!***

POMPADOUR.

REGENERATE.

STELLAR.

I KNOW THAT AIN'T HOW SHE SPELLS HER NAME BUT IT'S LIKE, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY TO DO SMART STUFF, IT ALL LEADS BACK TO ***STELLA.***

I'M STILL IN A ***MAZE,*** DOC. ONE THAT I CAN'T JUST BUST MY WAY OUT OF.

YOU JUST USED A ***METAPHOR.*** I THINK WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE...

BUT YOU SHOULD STAY AND HAVE MORE TESTS.

I WALKED OFF AND LEFT HER. I REALIZE NOW THAT MY ***HURT FEELINGS*** MAY INADVERTENTLY HAVE PUT HER LIFE AT RISK.

SAY, WHAT'S UP WITH THE ***SMART CHIMP?***

HE'S BECOMING INCREASINGLY ***PETULANT.*** SMASHED UP HIS ENTIRE COLLECTION OF CLASSICAL RECORDS TODAY.

I THINK WE MAY HAVE MOVED HIM ON TO PHILIP GLASS A LITTLE TOO SOON.

KA-SHHH

MY GOD!

IT'S A HIT!

SORRY. I MEANT TO KNOCK ON THE DOOR. FORGOT MY OWN STRENGTH.

HOPE I DIDN'T... DISTURB YOU.

DAMN RIGHT YOU *DISTURBED* US! WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT?

I, AH, CAME TO SEE IF STELLA'S OKAY. I JUST WALKED OUT ON HER, LIKE, AND...

AS YOU CAN SEE, I'M FINE. BUT THANKS FOR YOUR CONCERN.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR *HEAD?*

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE, RHINO. IMPRESS HER WITH YOUR WIT. CHARM HER WITH SOME KINDA AMUSING ANECDOTE.

I, AH... I FELL OFF THE JOHN.

YOU FELL OFF THE JOHN? OH GOD! YOU'RE DUMBER THAN EVER!

THIS IS A VERY HEART-WARMING REUNION, BUT NOW COULD YOU PLEASE GET ***LOST***, HORN-BOY?

I THOUGHT I'D HAVE THE JOB BACK PROTECTING STELLA. YOU KNOW THAT NO ONE CAN PROTECT HER AS WELL AS I CAN.

ARE YOU INFERRING THAT I CAN'T LOOK AFTER MY OWN ***FIANCE?***

YOU SEEM TO BE ***INFERRING*** THAT FROM WHAT I ***SAID***, BUT THAT ISN'T WHAT I WAS ***IMPLYING***, WHICH IS WHAT YOU ***MEANT***.

WHAT THE HELL DID HE JUST SAY?

HE WAS CORRECTING YOUR ENGLISH, ROMEO. A LOT OF PEOPLE CONFUSE ***INFER*** WITH ***IMPLY***.

INFER, IMPLY, WHO GIVES A DAMNSKI?

IT'S A USEFUL DISTINCTION...

THERE ARE TOO MANY WORDS THAT ARE LOSING THEIR SPECIFIC SHADES OF MEANING...

THE LANGUAGE IS POORER FOR IT...

I AGREE...

HONEY, WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE ME AND ***PROFESSOR RHINO*** ALONE FOR A MINUTE. WE GOT BUSINESS TO DISCUSS.

NICE MEETING YOU AGAIN, RHINO.

AH, LI-LIKEWISE...

LISTEN. YOU WANNA HELP ***PROTECT*** STELLA, RIGHT?

YEAH... AND IF I'M HER BODYGUARD...

THERE'S A BETTER WAY.

WE GOT A TIP THAT SOME OF THE ORGANIZATION WHO'RE AFTER HER ARE HAVING A ***MEETING*** TODAY AT A RESTAURANT. JOINT NAMED ***MARLON'S,*** IN BROOKLYN.

WE WERE GOING TO HIT THEM... BUT ***YOU*** CAN DO IT FOR US.

I DON'T KNOW...

YOU WANNA ***PROTECT*** HER, DON'T YOU?

SURE, BUT...

SO HIT MARLON'S. WITH ALL YOU GOT. THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE ***MADE*** FOR, AIN'T IT?

HE'S RIGHT, WHAT I'M MADE FOR, ALL I'M GOOD FOR.

I'LL DO THIS ONE JOB AND THEN MOVE AWAY. STOP THINKING ABOUT ***STELLA.***

STOP ***KIDDING*** MYSELF THAT JUST BECAUSE I SOMEHOW KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ***IMPLY*** AND ***INFER*** SHE COULD EVER SEE ANYTHING IN A FIVE-HUNDRED-POUND ***HORN-HEAD*** LIKE ME.

YEAH. YOU MIGHT WANT TO PASS ON THIS INFORMATION TO A CERTAIN ***WEBBED INDIVIDUAL.***

WHO AM I? LET'S JUST SAY I'M A CONCERNED CITIZEN WHO WANTS TO SEE CRIMINALS BEHIND BARS.

YOU'VE SET HIM UP!

BACK OFF, STELLA, THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

YOU MEAN... BECAUSE I'M JUST A WOMAN?

I ***MEAN*** BECAUSE YOU'RE ***MY*** WOMAN. AND THAT BIG LUG IS A BIG LIABILITY.

HE CAME BACK TO SEE IF I WAS OKAY!

BECAUSE HE'S GOT THE ***HOTS*** FOR YOU! BECAUSE HE WANTS TO PLAY ***HIDE-THE-HORN*** WITH YOU!

NOT EVERYONE'S AS ***BASE*** AS YOU!

I MUST HAVE BEEN CRAZY TO THINK I COULD LOVE YOU.

STELLA! ***COME BACK HERE!***

GET YOUR HANDS ***OFF ME!***

BHAFF

THINK HOW EASY LIFE WOULD BE IF THEY WERE ALL AS *STUPID* AS HIM.

ROMEO.

INFER.

JEALOUS.

IMPLY.

WHAT I'M...

...*MADE* FOR.

QUESTION: WHAT'S BIG AND SLOW AND NEVER GETS THE MESSAGE?

ANSWER:

...RHINO?

FUNNY.

KICKING *THE SPIDER'S* BUTT...

...IT DOESN'T FEEL QUITE AS *GOOD*...

THAT WAS... PRETTY SMART...

...AS I *THOUGHT* IT WOULD.

UGHNNN!

GLICK

DID YOU GET ALL THAT?

OH *YEAH!* OH BOY! DID I GET ALL THAT!

RHINO! IT'S A SET-UP!

YEAH. I FIGURED THAT.

YOU DID? ALL BY YOURSELF?

YES, STELLA. ALL BY MYSELF.

BUT HOW COME... HOW COME YOU BOTHERED TO COME AND... AND...

RHINO --

SCREEEEECH

-- YOU'RE DEAD!

YEAH. HEARD THAT ONE BEFORE.

WHUNK

GAS...
FLAMES...
BAD COMBINATION.
LADY! GET OUT OF HERE!
THIS WHOLE PLACE IS GOING TO GO *BANG* ANY MINUTE!
STELLA! *GET IN!* WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!
COME *ON,* BABY!
LET'S *GO,* LADY!

TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE, RHINO...

YOU'RE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE, LADY! THAT MAN IS A HARDENED CRIMINAL!

NOW YOU'RE **BOTH** DEAD!

WH-WHERE TO?

I DON'T KNOW. I CAN'T THINK ANY MORE. ***YOU'LL*** HAVE TO DO THE THINKING FOR ***BOTH*** OF US.

I'VE NEVER REALLY DONE ANY THINKING FOR ***ONE*** OF US, AND NOW I HAVE TO THINK FOR ***BOTH*** OF US?

BUT IT'S WEIRD. I'M NOT WORRIED. IN FACT, I AM PRETERNATURALLY ***CONFIDENT***. AND I'VE GOT A ***PLAN***.

I'VE NEVER HAD ANY OF ***THOSE*** BEFORE EITHER.

I AM SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING MAKING HIM MY HERO.

DAILY BUGLE
NEW YORK'S FINEST DAILY NEWSPAPER
F-1
HORN FREE!
THE SPIDER GETS SQUASHED!

COME ON. SPIDER-MAN MUST HAVE *LET* HIM DO IT.

NO WAY THE *RHINO* COULDA OUTWITTED *SPIDER-MAN!*

WAIT -- DO YOU HEAR THAT *NOISE?*

UH, RHINO, I THINK THE IDEA IS TO BREAK *OUT* OF JAIL. NOT *INTO* IT.

BE QUIET AND LISTEN. I AM OFFERING YOU FREEDOM. IF YOU AGREE TO WORK FOR ME.

I WILL MASTERMIND ALL ACTIVITIES. AND ONLY ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS WHOM I DEEM WORTHY WILL BE ROBBED.

DO WE HAVE A *DEAL,* GENTLEMEN?

A MONTH AFTER MY OPERATION TO IMPROVE THE SYNAPTIC EFFICACY OF MY BRAIN AND THINGS COULD NOT BE BETTER.

I'M IN LOVE. I'VE WRITTEN MY FIRST NOVEL. AND I'M THE KINGPIN OF A CITYWIDE CRIME SYNDICATE.

NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF ALL TAKINGS GO TO EASE THIRD-WORLD POVERTY, GIVE RELIEF TO OUR TROUBLED INNER CITIES, AND SUPPORT THE ARTS.

BUT ***EVERYTHING*** IS SECONDARY TO ***STELLA.***

I HAVE THE FINANCES TO DO ANYTHING I PLEASE, YET WHAT PLEASES US MOST IS AN EVENING IN, DISCUSSING THE MERITS OF ***THE SONNET,*** SAY, OR ***WITTGENSTEIN'S*** FOLLIES.

ADMITTEDLY, STELLA'S GRASP OF LANGUAGES AND PHILOSOPHY LEAVE A LITTLE TO BE DESIRED, BUT LOVE TRANSCENDS ALL.

THE SIGHT OF HER BODY, THE SOUND OF HER VOICE, MOVES ME LIKE A PERFECT IAMBIC QUATRAIN.

THE CHAPTER YOU WROTE LAST NIGHT... IT'S BREATHTAKING... THE PHYSICALITY OF A YOUNG HEMINGWAY... WITH THE LINGUISTIC BRAVURA OF A MODERN-DAY EMILY DICKINSON.

ACTUALLY, I'M REWRITING IT. IT SEEMS A LITTLE... CLUMSY AND SHALLOW TO ME NOW.

BUT I'M GLAD *YOU* LIKED IT.

I LOVE YOU...

I LOVE YOU TOO.

WE GO TO A NEW PRODUCTION OF ***HAMLET***.

I CAN MAKE PUBLIC APPEARANCES NOW. I READ AMERICAN LAW LAST TUESDAY AND FORCED A COURT INJUNCTION STOPPING ***SPIDER-MAN*** COMING WITHIN HALF A MILE OF ME.

HAMLET DISAPPOINTS. THE DIRECTION SLOPPY. THE WRITING, WELL, ***HALF***-WITTED. I IMPROVE IT ON THE WAY HOME.

HONEY, IT'S SOMEONE FOR YOU.

SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR... ***OPERATION?***

OH DEAR.

WHAT DROVE THE POOR SIMIAN TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE?

HE'D BEEN DEPRESSED. THE THINGS THAT MOVED AND ENFLAMED HIM AFTER HIS OPERATION... MUSIC, ART, ***SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING***... HE LOST INTEREST IN THEM...

PERHAPS HE WAS ***EVOLVING***. HIS MIND FOCUSING ON OTHER, MORE CONSEQUENTIAL MATTERS.

THAT'S WHAT WE HOPED BUT... HE LOST INTEREST IN ***EVERYTHING***.

THAT'S WHEN THE TEST RESULTS REVEALED OUR ***WORST FEARS***.

THE EFFECTS OF THE OPERATION WEAR OFF?

WORSE, POSSIBLY. THEY ***DON'T STOP***. THE LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE KEEPS INCREASING. ON AND ON...

THE SMART CHIMP BECAME, WELL, TOO CLEVER FOR HIS OWN GOOD.

YOU HAD ME WORRIED THERE. I CAN'T SEE THE PROBLEM. I MEAN...

HOW CAN ONE BE ***TOO*** INTELLIGENT?

WHAT KIND OF INANE EXCUSE FOR A QUESTION IS *THAT?*

A SIMPLE ONE! DO YOU... DO YOU STILL HAVE THOSE KIND OF FEELINGS FOR ME?

WHAT DID I SEE IN HER? HER SLUGGISH BRAIN, HER TEDIOUS PREOCCUPATION WITH ***FEELINGS.***

YOU MEAN THAT GENETIC TWITCH, SOCIO-PATERNALISTIC HICCUP, PHEROMONE PALSY INTERPRETED BY PRIMATES AND BANAL SONGWRITERS AS, AHEM, ***LOVE?***

I'M GOING BACK TO ***ROMEO!*** HE MIGHT BE A SEMI-LITERATE PSYCHOPATH, BUT HE KNOWS HOW TO ***TREAT*** A WOMAN!

AND YOU'LL SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIVES CHEWING BERRIES AND THROWING PEANUTS AT EACH OTHER I SUPPOSE?

YOU USED TO BE... ***SENSITIVE... CLEVER...*** NOW YOU'RE A ***MONSTER,*** AND I HATE YOU! I ***HATE*** YOU!

WHAT... HAVE I DONE? MY ONE ROUTE TO HAPPINESS, TORN UP. SHE'S RIGHT. I AM A ***MONSTER.***

MONSTER. FROM THE LATIN ***"MONSTRUM."*** A DIVINE PORTENT. A WARNING. A...

SHUT UP! SHUT UP! ***SHUT*** UP!

RHINO? IT'S ME.

THIS HAD BETTER NOT BE SOME FIENDISHLY CLEVER TRAP!

RELAX, ***SPIDER-MAN.*** I CALLED YOU HERE TO GIVE YOU THESE ***COMPUTER DISCS.***

IS THIS ANOTHER LEGAL LOOPHOLE YOU'RE EXPLOITING? WILL I BE DENYING YOU YOUR HUMAN RIGHTS IF I TAKE THEM?

NO, PETER. NOTHING LIKE THAT. THEY CONTAIN DETAILS OF MY CRIMINAL EMPIRE. DO WHAT YOU LIKE WITH THEM. I DON'T CARE.

WHAT DID YOU JUST CALL ME?

PETER. YOU'RE ***PETER PARKER.*** I CREATED AN ***ALGEBRAIC EQUATION*** THAT CAN DEDUCE THE SECRET NAMES OF ALL YOU SUPER HEROES.

BUT DON'T WORRY. WHERE ***I'M*** GOING, IT WON'T BE ANY USE TO ANYONE -- ***EVEN TO MYSELF.***

RHINO, ARE YOU... ARE YOU ***ALL RIGHT?***

WHY DO WE BOTHER, PETER? ALL THIS RUNNING AROUND IN SILLY COSTUMES. CRIME. GOOD VERSUS EVIL. LOVE. LIFE.

IT'S ALL SO UTTERLY ***FUTILE.***

SO UTTERLY, UTTERLY FUTILE.

I HAVE CALCULATED THAT THE CHANCES OF THERE BEING LIFE AFTER DEATH ARE ONE-POINT-THREE PERCENT.

GOOD ODDS, FOR SOMEONE WHO SEEKS OBLIVION.

I WANT TO ESCAPE FROM THE GEHENNA OF LINKS, MAZES AND MICRO-STRUCTURES THAT ARE MY THOUGHTS.

I HAVE LOST THE WORLD. I NO LONGER SEE PEOPLE AND THINGS. I SEE WAVES, CAUSALITIES...

NOISES REACH ME, POLYPHONIC, MODULATED AROUND A DOMINANT AND SUBTONIC...

MUSIC. IT'S ***MUSIC.*** I RECOGNIZE IT NOW. IT IS SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE ENJOY.

I SAW A CHIMP ONCE CONDUCTING AN ORCHESTRA... THEY HAD OPERATED ON HIS BRAIN...

MUSIC.

HIS BRAIN...

ARE YOU ***SURE*** THAT THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT, RHINO?

I'M SURE. LET'S GET ON WITH IT.

BUT I'VE NEVER TRIED TO REVERSE THE INTELLIGENCE OPERATION BEFORE... TO MAKE A PATIENT AS STUPID AS THEY ONCE WERE.

JUST FOLLOW MY DETAILED NOTES AND YOU'LL BE FINE. I'VE ALSO INCLUDED SOME IMPROVEMENTS ON YOUR ORIGINAL OPERATION. ***TRY*** NOT TO TOUCH THE CORPUS CALLOSUM.

OKAY. IT'S ***YOUR*** BRAIN...

START HER UP, FELLAS...

WAIT... ***WAIT!***

YEAH, I THOUGHT THIS WOULD HAPPEN. YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR MIND, HUH?

NO. BUT I WANT YOU TO ***DO*** SOMETHING FOR ME.

MAKE ME A LITTLE ***MORE*** STUPID THAN I WAS BEFORE, DOCTOR.

JUST TO BE ON THE ***SAFE*** SIDE...

NOW THAT ME AND STELLA ARE MARRIED I'M TAKING OVER THE DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING OF THE ORGANIZATION. FIRST THING ON THE AGENDA: ***SECURITY.***

YEAH... I HEARD A WHISPER THAT THE RHINO HAS GONE OVER TO THE COMPETITION.

AH. THAT BIG SCHMO IS ALL ***WASHED UP.***

DOES ANYONE HEAR THAT?

KRASHHH

DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET TIRED OF RUNNING THROUGH WALLS.

I'M ABOUT TO ATTACK 'EM WHEN SOMETHING CATCHES MY EYE. A BIG BOOK. WRITTEN BY ***WILLIAM SHAKE-SOMETHING...*** DUMB NAME...

BUT IT KINDA ***REMINDS*** ME OF SOMETHING... SOME OTHER TIME. OTHER ME. OTHER LIFE.

THEN I GET A ***GRIP.*** REMEMBER WHO I ***AM.***

I'M *RHINO.*

I KNOCK THINGS DOWN.

THAT'S WHAT I *DO.*

THAT'S *WHO* I *AM.*

THE END

DUNCAN FEGREDO

PORTRAIT OF SADEY LOOKING!
MORE PAINTINGS OF... SEURAT, MATISSE VAN GOGH... (OF COURSE)
ROSPIN ARMS AS HAND
STELLA TALKING ATTENTION HANDS CHEST.

GLENN FABRY

JOHN McCREA

Desperately trying to find perfect Spidey for the double page splash - the smaller the sketches get the better.
hey presto!

...I THINK IT SHE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE ANY TYPE OF SEX-BOMB, THOUGH I COULD ALWAYS DO HER LIKE THAT.
I'VE ALSO HAD HER RIPPING OUT OF HER CLOTHES BRUCE BANNER STYLE IN ALL OF THESE IDEAS... REST ASSURED THERE WON'T EVEN BE A SCENT OF HER UNDER-ARM DEODORANT TO RANKLE THE CENSOR.
ON PICTURES (B)+(C) I'VE OPTED FOR A BACKGROUND OF "DARK ALLEYWAY" SO POPULAR AND PROMINENT IN GRAPHIC SEQUENTIAL FICTION.
IF YOU WANT ANOTHER SETTING (TURKISH HAREM, ELEPHANT'S GRAVEYARD) LET US KNOW.
Cheers! (AND GARTH - SEE YOU TOMMORROW).

THIS AIN'T YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD.

WELCOME TO *SPIDER-MAN'S TANGLED WEB*, WHERE THE HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS EXPLORE THE FORMIDABLE SHADOW THAT SPIDER-MAN CASTS OVER HIS CITY AND ON ITS RESIDENTS.

A secret admirer has figured out just how Spider-Man got his super-powers, and that someone has attempted to re-create the freak experiment — with ghastly results…in *"THE THOUSAND,"* by Garth Ennis, John McCrea and James Hodgkins.

A Mob lieutenant's worst nightmare comes true when his latest job goes south — courtesy of Spider-Man — and he's summoned for a midnight meeting with the Big Boss himself — the Kingpin of Crime…in *"SEVERANCE PACKAGE,"* by Greg Rucka and Eduardo Risso.

A super-powered strongman in an impenetrable and irremovable suit discovers that the key to conquering his arch nemesis just might be in conquering himself first…in *"FLOWERS FOR RHINO,"* by Peter Milligan and Duncan Fegredo.

MARVEL

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